

**CONFIDENTIAL**

UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION

FOR

“METHOD OF PLAYING AND PAYING GAMBLING GAMES”

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## METHOD OF PLAYING AND PAYING GAMBLING GAMES

This application claims priority of Provisional Patent Application Ser. Nr. 60/246,855 having a filing date of 11/09/2000 and being incorporated herein in its entirety by reference.

### BACKGROUND - Field of the Invention

The present invention relates generally to gambling games, and in particular to methods of play and pays for blackjack card games and blackjack derivative games.

### BACKGROUND - Discussion of Prior Art

“Blackjack” or “twenty-one” (both names are used interchangeably herein) is a popular casino game played with a standard 52-card deck of playing cards. It is easy to play, and it is offered as both a live table game with human dealer or as an electronic game typically using a video display. The basic rules are the player bets and both player and dealer receive 2 cards each. Face cards count as 10 points, aces count as 1 or 11 and numbered cards as their face value. If the dealer points total 21 in the first 2 cards (a “blackjack”), the dealer (house) wins and the player loses, unless the player also has a blackjack, in which case the tie constitutes a draw or “push”. If the dealer has no blackjack, the player may “stand” (decline another card) or “hit” (receive another card). The player may take hits until deciding to stand or “busts” (exceeds 21 points). If a player busts, the bet is lost. When the player stands, the dealer must hit if the dealer point

total is 16 or less, else he stands. If the dealer and player point totals tie, it is declared a push and no one wins or loses. If the player has not busted and the player point total is greater than the dealer or the dealer busts, the player wins and is paid 1-for-1 in addition to receiving the bet back. Another common rule offers "splitting" where a player initially dealt a pair may also split the cards and play them as 2 hands by placing another bet. Yet another offers "doubling down" where a player may double their bet and receive 1 additional card only.

In standard blackjack, the house advantage is small. There must be some advantage, or the house would not offer the game. The rules of blackjack limit the player returns to even money or very small multiples of the bet (such as 3-for-2 on a player blackjack) to ensure the house retains an advantage. These small paybacks can make the game slow and boring.

To circumvent this inherent limitation, many blackjack variations have been introduced through the years to enhance player interest. Since the house advantage is small, there is little room to offer better paybacks to the player unless the rules are changed. In U.S. Pat. No. 5,615,888 for example, ten point cards are removed from the deck, increasing the house odds and permitting special payouts for various card combinations.

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Since players are often reluctant to see their rules changed, many recent blackjack derivations offer an optional side bet. For example, in a game known as "21 Madness" you might bet an additional \$1 that the dealer gets a blackjack. If they do, then you will receive an award of between \$1 and \$1000. While conditioned on a blackjack game being played, these side bets comprise separate and distinct games that play by rules different from the standard game of blackjack

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Video gambling devices typically consist of a cabinet built primarily of metal, plastic and glass that houses many different internal components. The basic functions are coin acceptance, game play and coin dispensing, although it is becoming increasingly common for slot machines to accept and pay back in currency or coupons instead of, or in addition to coins.

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Coin acceptance is most often done by means of a coin head where coins are inserted into the game. A coin chute directs the coin into an internal coin hopper, if equipped, or into a removable drop bucket beneath the machine when the hopper is full.

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Winners may be paid back to players from the coin hopper through a small chute where coins land in a special tray where they are available to the player. Again, bill acceptors common today may accept and payout in currency, coupons or script in addition to or instead of coins.

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Internally, game play is managed by a central processor on a printed circuit board similar to that of a standard personal computer. CD-Roms and proms (programmable read-only memory computer chips) are often used, too. A power supply provides the current, and the game is displayed back to the player on a video monitor. Buttons on the outside of the cabinet provide for player input, although sometimes touchscreen panels are affixed to the monitor and used in addition to, or instead of buttons. Other printed circuit boards perform auxiliary functions, and there are usually mechanical meters counting, at a minimum, coins in and out. Too, there is internal lighting to make the game clearly noticeable, and external glass usually shows the rules of the game. Finally, games may be networked to each other and report game and player statistics to the accounting office, or to play special games that are somehow linked to each other in a variety of different configurations.

Video forms of draw poker, unlike blackjack, pay according to a "paytable", which is a schedule of pays for various card combinations ("hands"). The paytable defines player objectives in terms of a monetary award or payback (also called payout or return). A common video poker paytable is illustrated in FIG. 1. Rare card combinations, such as a Royal Flush routinely offer paybacks of 250-for-1 or more, while simpler hands, such as Two Pair might pay 2-for-1. These greater paybacks add volatility to the game and make it more exciting by offering the chance to win a much greater award.

Unfortunately, these larger paybacks cannot be offered in traditional blackjack, since they either reduce the house advantage to an unacceptable level or eliminate it entirely.

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Like video poker, reel slot machines also pay according to a payable, which denotes various paying symbol combinations or other paying events. Slot machines today may be mechanical, electronic, video or combination. Video versions of traditional mechanical slot machines are now quite common and often offer second-screen feature games quite unrelated to the spinning reels. For example, one might select from one of five video treasure chests, whereupon an award is revealed. Getting to play these feature games is an event in-and-of-itself, and is often a primary play objective. Similarly, the use of a payable adds a great deal of interest to the gaming experience, since it offers a wide spectrum of payacks to players, as well as the potential for much larger awards. This volatility makes these games more fun and exciting.

Unfortunately, traditional blackjack, as well as newer variations thereof, is necessarily constrained to simple paybacks of 1-for-1, or in the case of a 2-card blackjack, 3-for-2, since the paying hands are relatively easy to obtain and players cannot have a mathematical advantage over the dealer or house. Therefore, blackjack does not generate the same excitement of video poker or reel slot machines, which offer much larger returns relative to the bet. Being much less volatile than most other casino games, blackjack is boring to many players.

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## OBJECTS AND ADVANTAGES

Accordingly, several objects and advantages of this invention are as follows:

1. This invention employs a true payable with blackjack, which offers variety in paybacks to players.

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2. This invention adds excitement to blackjack by offering the possibility for much larger paybacks. Volatility is a key component to player satisfaction.

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3. This invention enhances player interest and intrigue by altering player strategy, making the game much more involving and rewarding.

4. Employing blackjack with a payable per this invention allows the game's expected value to be infinitely adjusted, thereby allowing greater flexibility in game development and permitting its use in many more applications.

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5. This invention may be used as a bonus feature on traditional gambling games to encourage additional play. The right to play for an expected value exceeding 100% payback is very desirable and a motivator to players.

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6. This invention contributes all of the aforementioned advantages while allowing the traditional rules of playing blackjack to remain unchanged.

Further objects and advantages of my invention will become apparent from a consideration of the drawings and ensuing description.

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#### SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

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This invention offers a unique method of paying blackjack players. **This invention offers an enhanced payable that pays blackjack hands differently for achieving different winning player point totals.** This is in stark contrast to traditional twenty-one, where beating the dealer only pays 1-for-1 regardless of the player point score and the only deviating return is for a 2-card blackjack. (A blackjack is just a special type of, or subset of, the player point score 21.) This invention alters traditional blackjack strategy greatly, bringing a whole new dimension to the game.

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## DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a common video poker paytable.

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FIG. 2 is a sample blackjack paytable using this invention.

FIG. 3 is a sample inverted blackjack paytable using this invention.

FIG. 4 is a sample bonus blackjack paytable using this invention.

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## DETAILED DESCRIPTION - Preferred Embodiment

175 A conventional electronic video poker or video slot machine is typically used to  
practice the method of the present invention. Said video poker or video slot machine (the  
"gambling device") usually has electronic computer controls, a coin or note hopper,  
coin-in handling equipment, currency-in handling equipment (such as a bill acceptor), a  
video display and other optional equipment such as player tracking apparatus as is  
180 conventional. The computer controls are programmed to display and operate the method  
of the present invention. The payable is shown on the video display or affixed to the  
exterior of the gambling device so that it is convenient and conspicuously available to the  
player.

185 In the present embodiment entitled "Bonus Blackjack", this invention is bundled  
with a 5-reel video slot machine game and offered as the second-screen video bonus  
feature. The base slot machine game returns approximately 85% of all monies bet back  
to the player according to the slot machine payable. Approximately once each fifty slot  
games, required symbols appear on the slot machine triggering the second screen event.  
190 The player then plays this invention as a second-screen feature game, whereby they are  
paid (or not) according to a payable yielding, in this example, an average return of  
approximately 300% to the player. Since only 1 slot game in 50 offers the 300% Bonus  
Blackjack feature, the contribution to the overall game is  $1/50$  times 300%, or 6%. The  
overall game returns, then, 91% to the player on average made up of 85% from slot  
195 machine wins and 6% from Bonus Blackjack wins. This 91% player return yields 9% to

the house (100% less 91% in payouts), which is an acceptable house advantage! (Please note the figures used herein are for demonstration purposes only and may vary considerably from those shown.)

200 This invention adds a whole new dimension to the game, since it is not just beating the dealer that matters anymore, but with what score! While in the traditional game there are instances where the correct player strategy is to stand on 13, in this case, depending on the payable, the correct strategy for the same situation is clearly to hit!

205 Note that once in this feature game, the player has the advantage. This embodiment and its 300% payback is made possible by bundling the new blackjack game with a required qualification process. To play this new game, players must first qualify. Said qualification can occur by a variety of means such as paying cash, by achieving VIP status through the house player's club, by first reaching pre-determined events in another game, or by any other acceptable means. In the preferred embodiment, said qualification is achieved by first earning the right to play under the rules of the traditionally-styled video slot machine base game.

210 A typical blackjack payable incorporating this invention might appear as shown in FIG. 2.



## DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVE EMBODIMENTS

In alternative embodiment number 1, a payable might be inverted. It may be  
220 equally or more difficult to beat the dealer with a lower point score! A new bonus  
blackjack payable featuring an inverted payout might appear as shown in FIG. 3.

Regardless of whether it is more difficult statistically to beat the dealer with any  
point score of 4 through 16 than beating the dealer with a 17, this new inverted payable  
225 greatly affects the optimal player strategy adding yet another dimension to the game and  
yielding greater player interest.

In alternative embodiment number 2, a payable might reward a specific winning  
hand (or hands) with a greater payback. For example, a game featuring this invention  
230 might be entitled “Double Bonus Blackjack - Sweet Sixteen” and pay an inordinate return  
for beating the dealer with a player point score of 16. An example of such a payable is  
illustrated in FIG. 4.

In alternative embodiment number 3, the payable envisioned under this invention  
235 might pay differently for hard or soft player point scores. (A “soft” score includes an ace  
in the hand that may be counted as a 1 or 11. A “hard” score is any hand that does not  
include an ace, or where the ace must be counted as 1 to avoid a bust.)



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In alternative embodiment number 4, this invention might yield a payable that pays differently for a point score achieved with 3 or more cards than for a point total achieved with only 2 cards. For example, an 18 achieved cumulatively (with 3 or more cards) might pay differently than for a 18 achieved with only 2 cards. (This method is commonly used on a 2-card blackjack score of 21, but has not been offered for any other player point scores as suggested herein.) Similarly, a 2-card score of 20 might yield a new payable category referred to as a “redjack” in addition to, or instead of the traditional 2-card “blackjack” point score of 21.

In alternative embodiment number 5 this invention might be offered exclusive of a video slot machine or any electronic gaming platform and played on a traditional gaming table served by a live dealer.

Note that if a qualification process is employed, this invention makes it possible to even pay a prize on losing hands.

In the case of any of the above or other embodiments, if this invention is offered without the aforementioned qualification process, irrespective of whether played in a “live” or video version, it is likely that the payable would be markedly reduced in expected value to yield a payback of less than 100%. To ensure a house advantage, or to fine tune any game’s expected value, fractional pays such as 3 for 2, or 9 for 5 may be employed.



## CONCLUSION, RAMIFICATIONS AND SCOPE OF THE INVENTION

Accordingly, the reader will see that the paytables envisioned under this invention are versatile and can be used as powerful enhancements to most any blackjack game.

265 This invention offers a means to play "twenty one" by standard or non-standard rules while rewarding players for different point totals. Further, in certain embodiments and when viewed independently, this new game can yield the player better than a 100% return. Considered by itself, a game using this invention can eliminate the house advantage and increase volatility by offering more and/or greater payouts, making them  
270 more fun and exciting to play. Playing these generous new games are events to be looked forward to and sought after. The right to play a game truly in the player's favor (having an expected value or payback greater than 100%) is a goal in-and-of itself. Even embodiments returning less than 100% yield more varied payable returns making games with this invention more fun and interesting to play.

275 The examples and discussion herein should not be viewed as limiting this invention to this, or any particular embodiment. A creative person can envision many different forms of this invention yielding great utility in a variety of blackjack, blackjack-related and potentially similar, non-blackjack applications.

280 This invention improves certain gambling games by offering greater returns. Traditional "blackjack" or "twenty one" games can be boring because there is no

potential for large winners. A blackjack, a 2-card hand totaling a point score of 21, which is the player's best hand of all, usually only pays the player 3-for-2. In traditional  
285 "twenty one" all other hands that beat the dealer pay the same 1-for-1 regardless of the player point score.

This invention adds volatility to the game by rewarding players differently for different point scores achieved. Increased volatility adds excitement to the game by  
290 providing for greater winners. In our sample Bonus Blackjack game shown in FIG. 2, the 2-card blackjack pays 25-for-1, for example. These new returns enhance player strategy, yielding greater interest and excitement.

Bundling this invention with a required qualification process also permits payouts not otherwise possible. For example, in the preferred embodiment that uses our new  
295 enhanced payable as the second-screen feature on a video slot machine, we can offer a game played by traditional rules that pays much better. Clearly this is a benefit to players. In fact, this invention can yield average player returns on a specific game(s) greater than 100% while still preserving an overall house advantage. These alternative  
300 play and pay methods are also good for the house, since they now may offer more interesting, volatile and exciting alternative games to their players.